

LCA Strategies: LCANET *(see LCA 2/97, pp. 71-72)*

European Network for Strategic Life-Cycle Assessment Research and Development

Preface

Overall preface which substitutes the tentative prefaces of the four reports

This book contains the results of the concerted action LCANET organised under the DGXII Environment and Climate programme. The aims of this network were threefold:

- (1) to support the formation of a network in the field of LCA, in which academia, industry and government would meet and really interact
- (2) to describe the state-of-the-art of LCA methodology
- (3) to provide an input to the EU Environment and Climate research and development programme.

The activities started in March 1996 with a general network meeting in Copenhagen, defining and exploring the different main topics. In this meeting the aims of the network were further specified by stressing the need for LCA methodology development to take place in close connection with practical applications of LCA. Four main topics were identified:

- positioning and application of LCA
- goal and scope definition and inventory analysis
- life cycle impact assessment and interpretation
- databases and software.

For each of these topics one or two expert meetings were organised, as a basis both for the description of the state-of-the-art and for drawing up a draft research programme. Additionally, in connection with life cycle impact assessment, the role of the "work environment" was discussed in a separate expert meeting. In four workshops organised in conjunction in Noordwijkerhout near Leiden, these draft programmes were discussed and research priorities were established.

The research priorities of the separate programmes were subsequently brought together by the board of the network and synthesised into a small number of encompassing research lines which were discussed in a final meeting of the whole network held in Leiden.

In Chapter 1, these broad research lines are presented under the responsibility of the board of the network. The following chapters present the results of the separate main topics.

Chapter 2 deals with the positioning of LCA in relation to other tools, in view of the applications of LCA; in particular, it stresses the need to develop LCA not only as a technical tool but also as contribution to a decision making process.

Chapter 3 deals with the goal and scope definition and inventory analysis modelling and the way in which this modelling depends on the defined goal and scope of the study; furthermore, it explores ways to cope with the problem of uncertainty of the LCA results.

Chapter 4 deals with life cycle impact assessment and interpretation, in order to give priority to new impact categories, to damage functions linking category indicators to category endpoints, and to weighting across categories.

Chapter 5 deals with databases and software, in particular addressing the need of integration with databases for other tools, the need of quality monitoring of databases and validation of software.

Chapter 6, finally, deals with possibilities to include the "work environment" in LCA impact assessment.

In total, LCANET has nearly 200 members, most of them attended one or more of the organised meetings. The results are therefore developed and supported by a wide community of European experts in the field of LCA. Publications of LCANET results have given input to the research programme of the second phase of the 4th framework programme and to the fifth framework programme of the EU-DGXII Environment and Climate programme. However, it can be expected that the results will be of wider significance and will also, in a more general way, stimulate and focus LCA research and development in the forthcoming years. It is also to hope that the work of the network can be continued.

Helias A. Udo de Haes and Nicoline Wrisberg
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